

JUDE: PROTECTION FROM APOSTACY

VI. Responding To Apostates

(Jude 17-23)

I. Introduction

- A. Paul predicted that people in general would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived as the world drifted further and further into apostasy, cf. 2 Timothy 3:13; 4:3-4. Rising deception naturally coincides with a drop in trust wrought by the effects of people who have been painfully deceived, and a lack in trust in society tends to break down human institutions, the bedrock of society itself.
- B. The Epistle of Jude addresses the problem of apostasy (Jude 3b), and Jude 17-23 instructs us how to respond to apostates and their effects on others. We thus view this passage for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Responding To Apostates, Jude 17-23.

- A. We must first **guard ourselves** from apostates as taught in Jude 17-21:
 1. We must pay attention to the warnings that God's Word has already given us about apostates, Jude 17-18:
 - a. Jude reminded his readers that Christ's apostles had already warned them about mockers who would follow their own lusts (Jude 17-18), what clearly refers at least to the warning of 2 Peter 3:3b.
 - b. Then, in the context of 2 Peter 3:3b, Peter at 2 Peter 3:1-2 in turn urged believers to recall the words of Old Testament prophets about end time apostates and Christ's words that the apostles proclaimed on the subject (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 875), putting the prophets and apostles "on the same level of authority."
 - c. We must thus pay attention to all the warnings that Scripture has provided in identifying apostates.
 2. We must realize that apostates "cause a division" (*apodiorizo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 90), that they counter the unity of the local church, Jude 19a.
 3. We must realize that apostates are "natural [unspiritual, living on the material plane]" (*psuchikos*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 902), having a false spirituality and lacking the Holy Spirit, Jude 19b; Romans 8:9b.
 4. We must build up ourselves in our most holy faith, in the body of Biblical truth that was once-for-all delivered unto the saints by the apostles, Jude 20a with Jude 3b; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 923.
 5. We must pray "in the Holy Spirit," that is, pray "'out of hearts . . . that are indwelt, illuminated, and filled with the Holy Spirit,'" v. 20b; Ibid., citing George L. Taylor, Trans. And Exp. of the Epis. of Jude, p. 127.
 6. We must keep ourselves "in the love of God," what does not mean that we must keep ourselves saved, but that we must obey God, what leaves us in His loving, nurturing fellowship, John 15:10; Jude 21a.
 7. We must hope in Christ's deliverance from evil at the rapture, v. 21b; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
- B. Upon guarding ourselves, we must **minister to others** who are exposed to apostates as taught in Jude 22-23:
 1. Some fellow believers are "divided in mind, doubting" (*diakrino*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 184) regarding the truth due to the influence of apostates, and we must show them mercy, encouraging and building them up instead of criticizing and tearing them down, what only hurts the discipling of weak believers who struggle with doubt, Jude 22; Ibid.
 2. Some people are unsaved, about to fall into hell (v. 7), so disciplers must "snatch [them] away" (*harpazo*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 108) from the fire, evangelizing them, v. 23a; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 3. Some fellow believers are already caught up in apostate beliefs and sins and need to be shown mercy (*eleate*, present imperative of *eleao*, "have mercy on" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 835; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 130; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 248). However, in fear for the spiritual welfare of the disciplers themselves, those who disciple others believers who are already polluted by apostate beliefs and/or sins must hate even the "undergarment" (*chiton*, Ibid., p. 890) "stained, defiled" (*spiloo*, Ibid., p. 770) by the flesh, v. 23b. Thus, if any error and/or sin creates a potently unedifying influence, the one who disciplines those already tainted with such error and/or sin must in fear guard himself as he ministers.

Lesson: *In responding to apostates, (1) we must guard ourselves by (a) recalling Scripture predictions about the rise of apostates, by (b) noting the divisiveness and (c) false spirituality of apostates, by (d) building ourselves up in the truth, by (e) praying in the Spirit's power, by (f) heeding Scripture and by (g) hoping for the rapture. (2) We must then minister to others affected by apostates by (a) showing mercy to those who doubt, by (b) snatching away the lost from the error of apostates through evangelizing them and by (c) showing mercy but with great personal, self-protective reserve to believers who have already been polluted by apostates' errors and/or sins.*

Application: *May we heed Jude 17-23 in responding to apostates with spiritual victory.*